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Nesting of the Western Flycatcher in San Gabriel Canon.

BY H. J. LELAND, LOS ANGELES, CAL.

[Read before the Southern Division of the Cooper Orn. Club, Dec. 29, 1898.]

THE west fork of the San Gabriel is the longest, most picturesque and most beautiful canon that I have had the pleasure of visiting in the Sierra Nevada Mts. It was in this canon between the first and fifteenth of June of the seasons of 1896 and 1898 that I had an excellent opportunity of watching this flycatcher in its summer home. In the darkest parts of the canon where the walls are close together and the alders thickest, one will always find the Western Flycatcher during the breeding season. Nest building begins not earlier than May 10 and fresh eggs are rarely found after June 10, excepting where the bird has been deprived of her first set.

Only one brood is reared and after incubation has begun the female, unless disturbed, does not leave the nest, being fed by the male, who is often the cause of the nest being found while performing this duty. In location, these nests vary considerably. In 1896 when I visited this canon in company with Mr. C. E. Groesbeck we collected eleven full sets of eggs with nests, and with a single exception all were taken from various situations in water alders, such as natural cavities, old woodpeckers' holes, between the trunk and loose bark and in the main crotches. The exception was taken by Mr. Groesbeck from one of the sides of the canon, on a small ledge covered with moss.

When I again visited this canon in 1898 the location of the nests was reversed. I found more than fifteen nests but only succeeded in collecting eight sets of eggs, the other nests either containing young or eggs in which incubation was far advanced. Of these but two were found in trees. The first was taken on June 6 from between the trunk and loose bark of a water alder; the nest was eight feet from the ground and contained four nearly fresh eggs. The other was found two days later and was situated close to the edge of a large hole in the under side of a hollow log which had fallen across the stream. The nest was about four feet above the water and contained three eggs, two of which were pipped. Had I not been fishing this nest would probably have escaped my notice, as I flushed the bird just as I was about to pass under the log. The other nests found were in small holes in the bank, or on ledges, usually where there was an abundance of moss and varied from two to fifteen feet from the bed of the canon. In all cases the nests were well protected from rain and any loose rock which might roll down from the sides of the cliffs. The nests taken from the bank were nearly all composed of moss, while those taken from the trees were lined with fine grasses and other material.



Macgillivray's Warbler in Alameda Co., Cal.

VERY little seems to be known of known of the nesting of Macgillivray's Warbler in Alameda county. Mr. H. R. Taylor found a nest last May containing two eggs, but the birds had deserted the nest on his next visit. A friend of mine found a nest last year among the bracken near the same locality. I think it was in 1891 that I first noticed the bird in the county, when I saw a male in Redwood canon where I

have subsequently seen these warblers in breeding season.

In 1896 I flushed a pair near Contra Costa Co. from a brushy ravine with a small brook running through it. The birds had evidently nested among the thick bracken growing close to the brook and extending along it about forty feet and up the side hill forty or fifty feet. This was about June 2 and two young birds were noted, not yet

able to fly. Not far from this pair of adults I noted a male and two more a mile further on. In several other places along the creeks I found birds in May and June and this year toward the last of May discovered a completed nest near where I had seen the young two years ago. The nest was about ten inches off the ground among a cluster of ferns in just such a locality as before described. I had to part the ferns to see the nest and the parents made quite a fuss, but abandoned the premises as I discovered ten days later.

It seems to be a common trait with this warbler to desert its nest after discovery. A friend found a nest in this county on June 3 containing two fresh eggs and on visiting it June 6 it held no more. On the 7th we both went to it and the female was incubating her two eggs. The nest was eight or ten inches from the ground among wild blackberry vines on the creek bank in an open part. The same collector took a nest and four fresh eggs two miles from this site on June 6.

Macgillivray's Warbler is shy, retiring and rather more common than expected if sought for without too much noise. Mr. W. O. Emerson reports this species at Haywards in various seasons as follows:—Female shot on May 2, 1881; nest of five downy young on May 22, 1881, on creek bank in thick brambles 2½ feet from the ground; male seen May 27, 1883, along creek; three males seen in a ravine April 12, 1895; two males seen on April 18, 1897, in thick brush on the hills.

DONALD A. COHEN.

Alameda, Cal.

Notes on the Nesting of the Slender-billed Nuthatch.

THIS interesting bird may be classed as a common resident in this locality, but notwithstanding, several pairs succeed in raising a brood each season they do not increase, although a pair are invariably to be found in their old breeding grounds every year. Scattered throughout the valley are many large white and black oaks and in these the birds secure their

food and find suitable nesting sites. They apparently remain paired the year round and are early nesters. My earliest nest was found March 23 and contained four fresh eggs and by the middle of April it would be hard to secure fresh eggs. A natural cavity is preferred but occasionally an old woodpecker's cavity is used.

The nest is composed of grass, moss, strings, fur, hair and feathers, of which materials the cavity usually contains a large amount. The nuthatch is a close sitter and occasionally one or more eggs are broken while removing the bird. A full set contains from five to nine eggs, the average being seven or eight.

When the set is complete one of the birds remains on the nest and the other now leads a very active life for it furnishes food for its nesting mate. The bird covers considerable ground in looking for food and when it reaches a tree nearly every limb seems to be searched for lurking insects and when one is secured the bird takes the nearest way to the tree where its nest is concealed, and going to the cavity delivers the insect and is off again in search of another. While searching for food it can be heard calling at short intervals and it is during this time that I generally locate my nest, but if the bird discovers you it will change the method of reaching its nest, going in a round-about way and thus often eluding one, no matter how carefully he may watch, and if you do reach the tree and are seen before the bird delivers the insect, it will not, in most instances, deliver the food while you are about.

I have never found the birds in heavy timber, but found a pair on the high ridge between Sonoma and Petaluma valleys, to reach which they must have travelled through heavy timber. It was an ideal place for the birds, being sparsely covered with large oaks where they could find plenty of food and good nesting sites. My observations tend to show that these birds are beneficial and deserving of protection from all. I would like to see them increase and often wonder what becomes of those raised in this valley.

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Sonoma, Cal.